In that relation I want to ask whether these hundred districts are having the largest number of persons below the poverty line. You say either yes or no.

SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL: Sir, according to the Committee, yes.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: I think the Minister should take some time to prepare his answers.

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister has a very detailed knowledge of the problems of rural people because he comes from an agricultural background. My question is that there was a mention about poverty alleviation programmes. Earlier there were Lakadawla Committee recommendations. Subsequently, the Government appointed another committee under the chairmanship of Shri Sarma. Both the recommendations are before the Government. Is the Government considering recommendations of both the committees or is it considering the recommendations of the Sarma Committee only?

Secondly, is there any specific programme before the Government to uplift the poorest of the poor on the lines of the Antyodaya Programme, that is, identifying five or ten families in each village and then giving them some sort of assistance to uplift them from poverty? Is there any specific proposal before the Government? If there is no proposal before the Government, will the Government consider this particular suggestion and give it serious consideration? Along with that, there are certain backward areas in the country. There is a mention in the programme of the Government also, that is, the National Agenda, about the backward areas development programme. Is the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment concerned about it? Have they given any thought to that subject? Have they prepared any schemes?

SHRI BABAGOUD PATIL: Sir, we are considering the reports of both the committees. We have also constituted an internal committe for that.

SHRI PRANAB MUKERJEE: That committee has nonthing to do with it. That is about the poverty line. That has nothing to do wih the identification of hundred districts.

SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL: Poverty line is one of the criteria, Sir. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Mr. Chairmah, Sir, there may be a half-an-hour discussion on this. And let us go to the next question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will have a half-an-hour discussion on this and the hon. Members may send their points so that the Minister can possibly reply to all of them.

Employment generation scheme in rural areas

*102. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state the details of proposed employment generation schemes etc. to be launched for rural population in different States by the Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL): The Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment is implementing the following programmes for employment generation in the rural areas:—

1. Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY),
2. Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS),
3. Million Wells Scheme (MWS)
4. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP),
5. Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA),
6. Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), and
7. Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA).

While JRY, EAS and MWS are the wage-employment programmes, the others are self-employment programme. The ministry has recognised the increasing need to strengthen, restructure and streamline the present programmes to make them more effective, transparent and result-oriented. There is,

however, no proposal to launch any new scheme for employment generation in the rural areas.

SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am very sorry to state that the different programes listed in reply to my question aim at poverty alleviation in the rural areas have, in fact, increased the percentage of people living below poverty-line. This necessitates a change in the nature and the quantum of the schemes. My question was: What are the details of the proposed schemes which are to be launched? This particular point is absent in the reply. I did not ask for the details of the schemes which are being implemented. So, I reiterate my question. What are the schemes for employment generation in rural areas which will be launched? Does the Ministrer mean that no new schemes are being launched? We are not in a position to know the details or the nature of any new schemes.

I will ask my first supplementary like this. The majority of the programmes listed in the reply are an excellent example to illustrate that these have not benefited the actual beneficiaries and have been unable to check the rising poverty and percentage in rural areas, not some special areas but rural areas as a whole.

Sir, through you, I would like to know from the Minister whether annual or concurrent evaluation of each ot these schemes is done, and if yes, what the conclusions in each case are.

SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as far as the first part of the question is concerned, I would like to say that we are going to strengthen the existing programmes. We are making these programmes result-oriented. There is no new scheme to be lauched. As far as the second part of the question is concerned, I would like to say that evaluation is done by our Ministry periodically.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member wants to know about the results of that evaluation.

SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL : Sir, concurrent evaluation is conducted to evalaute the impact of the mplementaion of on-going programmes, to bring out the bottlenecks/ shortcomings in these programmes and to suggest new corrective measures to improve it. Sir, the CAG has pointed out deficiencies in the implementaion of the rural development programmes. These reports are being examined by the Public Accounts Committee. The deficiencies have been brought to the notice of the State Governments and steps are being taken to improve the implementation of these programmes.

SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Sir, my second supplementary is this. I need not over emphasise the general backwardness or full backwardness of a particular region of this great country, i.e. the North-East. May I know from the hon. Minister whether any special consideration is given to the States of the North-Eastern region which deserve such treatment by any standard or yardstick? If yes, the details, and if not, the reasons.

SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL: Sir, this supplementary does not relate to the main question. If the hon. Member puts a separate question, I will answer that.

श्री शमशेर सिंह सुरजेवाला: चेयरमैन सर, मैं रोजगार मंत्री से जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या यह बात सच है कि पिछले तीन वर्ष में अकेले उत्तर-पश्चिम भारत के जो पांच प्रांत हैं, जिसमें हरियाणा, पंजाब, राजस्थान, उत्तर प्रदेश और दिल्ली के देहात हैं, इनमें 25 हजार से ज्यादा गांव के जो नौजवान हैं, रूरल यूथ जो है, पढ़े-लिखे और बिना पढ़े-लिखे, वे बेरोजगार थे और भूख के कारण वे आत्म-हत्या कर चुके हैं। इसी प्रकार से साठ्थ में इससे भी ज्यादा लोग, वहां गांवों के किसान के जो बेटे थे, जो बेरोजगार थे, भूख के कारण वे भी आत्म-हत्या कर चुके हैं। लाख के करीब लोग पिछले तीन सालों में आत्म-हत्या कर चूके है। तो क्या मंत्री महोदय बतायेंगे कि उनकी जो स्कीमें हैं, जिनका उन्होंने जिक्र किया है क्या उनको वे इन आत्म-हत्याओं को रोकने के लिए सक्षम समझते हैं? अगर नहीं, तो क्या मंत्री महोदय यह मानने का कष्ट करेंगे कि इसके लिए एक नई सोच की जरूरत है? अगर उनको मेरे आंकड़ों में कोई गलती लगती है तो मैं चैलेंज करता हूं कि क्या मंत्री महोदय सरकारी मशीनरी द्वारा ये आंकड़े इकट्ठे करवायेंगे कि पिछले तीन सालों में कितने नौजवानों ने भूख के कारण आत्म-हत्या की है।

SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, for that purpose we are converging so many programmes related to self-employment. Sir, the day before yesterday the hon. Finance Minister gave a note on that. We are asking the NABARD also for creating

facilities for rural youth. We are making the self-employment programme comprehensive by converging so may programmes like DWCRA, IRDP, CITRA, etc.

श्री शमशेर सिंह सुरजेवाला: मैंने मंत्री जी से यह पूछा था कि क्या सच है कि 25 हजार लोगों ने पिछले तीन सालों में आत्म-हत्या की है।

MR. CHAIRMAN: That issue is being taken up next week. Why are you putting it up here now? Shri Govindram Miri.

SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, various schemes that are laid down in the reply are already existing. The Government has not deteremined to launch new schemes for employment. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether these existing programmes are sufficient to meet the challenges of rural employment. I would also like to know further whether the Government proposes to take any steps in future for streamlining DWCRA, UNDP and TRYSEM.

SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL: The hon. Member may please give suggestions regarding finance. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI: Are the schemes suficient to meet the challenges of rural employment?

Freedom Fighters' Pension

*103. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cases of freedom fighters' pension pending for more than five years in respect of the State of Tamil Nadu; and

(b) the steps being taken by Government to dispose of the pending cases?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) There are no cases of freedom fighters' pension pending for more than five years in respect of the State of Tamil Nadu.

(b) In view of reply to part (a) question does not arise.

SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Sir, I congratulate the Minister for giving me an answer that there are no cases pending for more than five years with regard to Tamil Nadu. I appreciate the Government. Now we are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence. I want to put my first supplementary. A joint committee for freedom fighters and officials was constituted by the Centre to look into various problems faced by our freedom fighters as also to look into the enhancement of pension in the scheme of 1980, that is Swatantrata Sainik Samman. This scheme is dated July, 1997. The said joint committee made several recommendations including enhancement of pension to freedom fighters on 28.7.1997. What are the steps taken by the Government to implement the recommendations of the said joint committee and if not, why and what are the reasons thereof.

SHRI L.K. ADVANI: Sir, this scheme was launced in 1972 and at that time the pension that was given was meagre, though in terms of the value of the rupee which has naturally been enhanced but today various representations made from freeom fighters have been regularly processed and what is being done today is to some extent satisfactory. By and large, I would like to say that 74,000 freedom fighters eligible dependents are today drawing pension. In the beginning it was Rs. 200 or so per month whereas today it is Rs. 3,000 apart from other facilities that are extended to them.

SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Sir, secondly I would like to know whether the Government is considering enhancing the pension to freedom-fighters' under the pension schemes of 1980 on the basis of the cost of living index and whether the Government has received any representation for enhancing the pension in any other manner. If so, the details thereof.

SHRI L.K. ADVANI: I am sure, the hon. Member is aware that it is linked with the price index.

SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Sir, though this question relates to Tamil Nadu, I would like to put a question about Kerala. ...*(Interruptions)*. . Sir, I request you to please allow me to put it. ...*(Interruptions)*... Recently, the UF Government decided to treat the Vayalar-Punnappara as a struggle for freedom and give pension to the people who took part in it. This decision was taken by the previous